

WHY DO I NEED A HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES (HMS) VESSEL PERMIT?

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requires vessel permits for Atlantic HMS (tunas- bluefin, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack; billfish; swordfish; and sharks) to monitor fishing effort, gain an understanding about fishery participants, distribute regulatory and other information, and collect data for management decisions.

WHO NEEDS A VESSEL PERMIT?

Anyone who fishes for HMS, commercially or recreationally, must have a permit. The types of vessel permits are:

Recreational HMS Angling Vessel Permit

(Tuna, Swordfish, Billfish, Shark)

HMS Charter/Headboat Vessel Permit

(Tuna, Swordfish, Billfish, Shark)

Commercial Vessel Permits:

Tuna (General, Harpoon, Trap, Purse Seine Limited Access, Longline Limited Access)

Shark Limited Access

(Directed, Incidental)

Swordfish Limited Access

(Directed, Incidental, Handgear)

WHERE DO I GET A PERMIT?

No new commercial shark and swordfish limited access permits are being issued by NMFS. Transfers and renewals are processed by NMFS (1-727-824-5326). The Atlantic tunas, Atlantic HMS Angling, and Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat permits are available by calling 1-888-872-8862 or by logging onto www.nmfspermits.com.

HMS ANGLING PERMIT

- Owners of vessels used to fish recreationally (*i.e.*, no sale of fish) for HMS should obtain an HMS Angling permit. Additional state regulations may also apply.
- Recreational permittees may not sell, barter, or trade Atlantic HMS.
- Recreational bag limits and reporting requirements may apply.
- For North Atlantic swordfish and sharks, this permit requirement applies when fishing in Federal waters and also international waters for swordfish.
- For regulated tuna species, this permit requirement applies in Federal, international, and state waters (see 50 C.F.R. 635.1 for specific states).
- Owners of vessels that catch, retain, possess, or land Atlantic billfish should have this permit, because minimum size and other regulations apply to any billfish harvested from the Atlantic Ocean.
- *HMS Angling Category Authorized gears: Tuna:* Rod and reel (includes downriggers), handline; *Billfish:* Rod and reel; *Swordfish:* Rod and reel, handline; *Shark:* Rod and reel (includes downriggers), handline.

TUNA COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic tunas may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- Only one permit category may be assigned to a vessel. Vessels issued a tuna commercial permit may not obtain an HMS Charter/Headboat or HMS Angling permit.
- Authorized gears for a particular category apply only to bluefin tuna fishing. Bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tuna may be taken with any authorized gear for tunas, except that purse seine and longline gear is

restricted for use by vessels with limited access permits.

- Retention limits and reporting requirements vary by permit type.

General Category: Vessel owners who use handgear to harvest Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant bluefin tuna, and sell the fish must obtain a General category permit. Vessels issued a General category permit may not retain swordfish, shark, or billfish recreationally, except when participating in a registered tournament. *Authorized gear: Handgear.*

Harpoon Category: Vessel owners who participate in the commercial harpoon fishery for Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant bluefin tuna, must obtain a Harpoon category permit. *Authorized gear: Harpoon.*

Trap Category: Vessel owners who participate in trap fisheries that may result in the incidental taking of large medium and giant bluefin tuna must obtain a Trap category permit. *Authorized gear: Pound net, fish weir.*

Purse Seine Category-- Limited Access:

Vessel owners who participate in the commercial purse seine fishery for Atlantic tunas, including bluefin tuna, must obtain a Purse Seine category permit. Because the tuna purse seine fishery is limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NMFS. However, NMFS processes permit transfers. *Authorized gear: Purse Seine.*

Longline Category -- Limited Access: Vessel owners who participate in commercial longline fisheries for Atlantic tunas, including the incidental take of large medium and giant bluefin tuna, must obtain a Longline category

permit. *A Longline category permit is only valid when held in combination with a Directed or Incidental Swordfish Limited Access Permit and a Shark Limited Access Permit.* Because the tuna longline fishery is limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NMFS. However, NMFS processes permit transfers. *Authorized Gear: Longline.*

SHARK COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic sharks may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Because the commercial shark fisheries are limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NMFS. However, NMFS processes permit renewals and transfers.
- Vessel upgrading restrictions apply to directed shark permit transfers.
- As a condition of the shark permit, the vessel’s shark fishing, catch, and gear are subject to the Federal shark regulations regardless of where the vessel is fishing or where the shark or gear are possessed, taken, or landed. More restrictive regulations may apply in state waters.

Directed Shark Limited Access Permit:

Vessel owners issued directed shark permits cannot retain, possess, or land more than 4,000 lbs dressed weight of large coastal sharks per trip. No commercial retention limits apply to small coastal or pelagic sharks. *Authorized gear: Longline, gillnet, handgear*

Incidental Shark Limited Access Permit:

Vessel owners issued incidental shark permits cannot retain, possess, or land more than 5 large coastal sharks, and 16 small coastal and pelagic sharks, combined, per trip. *Authorized gear: Longline, gillnet, handgear.*

SWORDFISH COMMERCIAL PERMITS

- Atlantic swordfish may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers.
- ***A Directed or Incidental Swordfish Limited Access Permit is only valid when held in combination with a Tuna Longline Category Permit and a Shark Limited Access Permit.***
- A handgear swordfish permit is valid without other permits.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Because the commercial swordfish fisheries are limited access, you cannot obtain a new permit from NMFS. However, NMFS processes permit renewals and transfers.
- Vessel upgrading restrictions apply to directed and handgear permit transfers.
- As a condition of the permit, the vessel's swordfish fishing, catch, and gear are subject to the Federal swordfish regulations regardless of where the vessel is fishing or where the swordfish or gear are possessed, taken, or landed. More restrictive regulations may apply in state waters.

Directed Swordfish Limited Access Permit:

When the directed fishery is open, no commercial swordfish retention limits apply to vessel owners issued a directed swordfish permit. If the directed fishery is closed, incidental catch limits apply. *Authorized gear: Longline, handgear.*

Incidental Swordfish Limited Access

Permit: Vessel owners issued an incidental swordfish permit cannot retain, possess or land more than 2 swordfish per trip, except for vessels using squid trawl gear which may retain up to 5 swordfish per trip. *Authorized*

gear: Longline, handgear.

Swordfish Handgear Limited Access

Permit: When the directed fishery is open, no commercial swordfish retention limits apply to vessel owners issued a swordfish handgear permit. When the directed fishery is closed, no swordfish may be retained with a harpoon and 2 swordfish per trip may be retained with handgear other than harpoon. *Authorized gear: Handgear.*

HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMITS

- Owners of vessels that carry passengers for hire and fish for Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS Charter/headboat permit.
- Vessel owners may sell tunas; shark and swordfish can only be sold if the appropriate commercial shark and swordfish permits have also been issued to the vessel and the fishing season is open.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- *Authorized gear depends upon the species. Please call the appropriate office for the species of concern listed below.*

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/

www.nmfspermits.com

1-888-872-8862 (HMS Permits)

Tuna Issues

HMS Gloucester 978-281-9260

Shark, Swordfish, & Permitting Issues

HMS Headquarters 301-713-2347

Recreational Swordfish & Billfish Issues

HMS St. Petersburg 727-824-5399

National Marine Fisheries Service
Highly Migratory Species Management Div.
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Vessel Permit Requirements



National Marine Fisheries Service

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species Management Division

This pamphlet provides a summary of HMS permit regulations, as of February 2005. For the complete and official set of regulations see 50 CFR part 635 and the Federal Register or call the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest complete regulations and are responsible for complying with current official regulations. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this pamphlet, the official regulations take precedence. This brochure is produced in compliance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

